



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Unleash Your Decision-Making Power!

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Do you realize that every day you have the power to dramatically influence your world? In fact, you do it every day whether you're aware of it or not. I'm referring to the countless decisions each of us makes every day in our professional or personal lives.

Every decision you make affects the quality and direction of your life to some degree. Some decisions have more neutral consequences while others have a profound impact. Think about your life experiences: Wouldn't your life be radically different if you had made different decisions? Even small decisions can have a major impact on your life if measured over the course of several years.

Think about all the decisions you make regarding your business just in the area of marketing alone:

- What is my unique selling proposition? How do I most effectively communicate that?
- What are the best marketing strategies to employ?
- How much money should I invest in advertising?
- Should I specialize into a more focused niche? If so, in which area?
- What is the most efficient system I can use to follow up on leads?

There are an endless number of examples we could examine that will affect our professional and personal direction and future.

REASONS FOR NOT MAKING DECISIONS

So, if decisions have such a powerful influence in our lives, why do we tend to put them off? Here are three reasons I have observed in working with my coaching clients:

1. Fear of Failure

You may be afraid of making the wrong decision, so you resolve this by not making a deci-

sion. We've been taught in school to avoid making mistakes—instead we should strive to be perfect. But don't we learn much more from our mistakes than we do from being "perfect"? Show me someone who has not failed and I'll show you a person who has not taken a risk. This isn't to say that we should go around making reckless decisions. We just want to be aware of how fear of failure can prevent us from making decisions at all.

2. Uncertainty About the Consequences of Making the Decision

In the same vein, you may put off decisions because you believe that a decision shouldn't be made until you're certain it will work out. The truth is that decisions are made based on *probability, not certainty*. For example, when you decide to hire a new employee, there are no guarantees that it will work out. There is only so much interviewing and background checking you can do and then you must make a decision. If you wait until you're certain, it will be too late.

3. Information Overwhelm

These days almost everyone is busier than they would like to be. We are constantly deluged with information thanks to the Internet, email, voice mail, fax machines, etc. Then when we are pressured to make decisions based on all of this information that surrounds us, we often don't know where to start.

THE COST OF NOT MAKING DECISIONS

So what's happening when you avoid making decisions? You are probably *associating more pain to making the decision than to NOT making the decision*. If I'm afraid that my decision may be the wrong one, it probably feels much more comfortable not making the decision or at least putting it off as long as possible.



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The problem with this line of thinking is that we're not factoring in the cost of not making the decision. But the truth is that **"no decision" is a decision!** Just as deciding has consequences, **not deciding** also carries a future result that could be even more detrimental to your business. You can probably think of key opportunities you missed out on because you waited too long to act. The timing of the decision can be just as important as the decision itself.

SIX STEPS TO EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

In order to overcome the challenges of putting off decisions, it's helpful to have a system or process for making complex decisions. In his audio program, "The Time of Your Life," Anthony Robbins provides a six-step process to effective decision making:

1. Get Clear on Your Outcome(s)

What is the specific result you are after? Why do you want to achieve it? Get clear on your outcomes and their order of importance to you. Be as specific as possible.

2. Define Your Options

Brainstorm all of your options, including those that initially sound implausible. There is a principle that says you need at least three options before you make a decision. The rule works as follows:

One option is no choice.

Two options is a dilemma.

Three options is a choice.

Make sure you give yourself true choice. Also, remember to include "doing nothing" as an option.

3. Identify the Consequences

What are the upsides and downsides of each option? What will you gain from each option? What will each option cost you?

4. Evaluate

Weigh the consequences of each option. Review your options and evaluate each of their upsides and downsides.

- What outcomes are affected?
- How important is each upside/downside in terms of meeting your outcomes (on a scale of 0 to 10)?
- What is the probability that the upside/downside will occur (0 to 100 percent)?
- What is the benefit or consequence if this option were to actually happen?

After completing this stage, you will be able to eliminate some options from your list.

5. Mitigate

Review the "downside" consequences for each of your remaining options. Then brainstorm alternative ways to eliminate or reduce the downside.

6. Resolve

Based on the most probable consequences, select the option that provides the greatest certainty you will meet your desired outcomes and goals.

- Select your best option and strengthen your resolve to make it work.
- Resolve that no matter what happens, this option will give you a win.
- Design your plan for implementation and then take massive action in order to attain your outcome.

Now that you have a system, get out there and make the decisions that lead to timely action for success! ●